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ABSTRACT

Literature on educational policies of the "New Right" suggests that within a neoliberal context, school principals become institutional managers rather than educational leaders. The practice of feminist educational leadership, which works for improved social justice and equity for staff and students, is committed to empowering coworkers, and seeks to establish a caring school community, appears to be antithetical to the context of the New Right. This paper presents findings of a study that examined the feminist educational leadership practices of three women who were principals of coeducational secondary schools in New Zealand. Data were gathered through interviews with staff and 13 secondary-school principals (who identified themselves as feminists), an indepth study of 3 of those principals, observation, and document analysis. The paper describes how the increase in financial, accountability, and marketing responsibilities affected the principals' ability to implement their feminist leadership agendas. The paper describes ways in which the principals shared power despite the New Right managerial leadership ethos and how they responded to the managerial ethos through strategies of resistance, agreement, and appropriation. Finally, personal value systems and school context also affected how the principals carried out their feminist partnerships. (Contains 42 references.) (LMI)

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Resistance, agreement and appropriation: Practising feminist educational leadership in a 'New Right' context

Paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 24-28 March, 1997, Chicago.

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Introduction

Little research has specifically examined feminist educational leadership. The study described in this paper explored not only how feminist educational leadership was practised but in what ways the 'New Right' educational climate influenced that leadership.

The meagre literature on feminist educational leadership suggested women whose leadership was informed by a feminist agenda were committed to improving student achievement, worked for improved social justice and equity for staff and students in their schools, were committed to empowering those they worked with, and worked to establish a caring school community (Beck, 1992; Blackmore, 1996; Gosetti & Rusch, 1995; Regan, 1990). This did not preclude those who do not identify as feminist from having the same leadership agenda. However, as Grundy (1993) suggested these foci are considered essential to the practice of feminist educational leadership.

The literature that has addressed the impact of the policies of the 'New Right' on schooling in New Zealand has been characterised by its contradictory nature. Proponents of neo-liberal policies claimed that greater equity and efficiency would be achieved by giving greater control and responsibility to schools and by increasing consumer (parental) choice. A number of strategies were suggested as essential to the process of improving educational outcomes including increasing competition, contestability and choice, reducing government intervention and increasing accountability. However, the changes which were embedded in neo-liberal ('New Right') ideology were introduced in 1989, had far reaching effects on New Zealand schooling.

For example, the nature of principals work changed dramatically after the introduction of the 1989 'New Right' education reforms. Rather than being educational leaders school principals became institutional managers (Codd, 1990, 1993), workloads increased dramatically (Keown, McGee & Oliver, 1992; Mitchell, Jefferies, Keown & McConnell, 1992; Robertson, 1991,1995; Wylie, 1995), and greater efficiency and equity were not achieved (Gordon, 1993; Lauder, Hughes, Waslander, Thrupp, McGlinn, Newton, & Dupuis, 1994; Waslander & Thrupp, 1995). So, the literature suggested that given the demands of leading a school within a 'New Right' context realising a feminist educational leadership agenda could be very difficult. The principles of feminist educational leadership and the 'New Right' appeared to be antithetical.

This study contextualised feminist educational leadership firstly in the coeducational secondary school and secondly in the 'New Right.' It specifically examined the feminist educational leadership of three women who were principals of coeducational secondary schools.

The Study

I used a qualitative, feminist, case study methodology and collected information by interviewing and observing each principal, interviewing a selection of staff, and by collecting documents such as school newsletters, prospectuses, and magazines. The framework for the study was based on that offered by Ribbins (1993). He maintained that principalship should be studied firstly as a *situated perspective*. A situated perspective is when a comprehensive in-depth range of views principals hold on a comprehensive range of issues is investigated. This information can be obtained in a number of differing ways, such as in writing or from face to face interviews. Portraits of individual principals are then presented in-depth. Secondly, a *contextualised perspective* presents the principal's work within the context of how significant others view their work. This information can be gathered using informal conversations; for example with teachers. Finally, a *contextualised perspective in action* explores what the principals say they do with what they actually do in a variety of situations. Observing a principal in action is one method of gaining such a perspective.

New Zealand is a small island nation with a population of 3.4 million. Women are principals of only 13% of the 220 coeducational secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 1996). When I contacted these women and explained my study (the practice of feminist educational leadership in a 'New Right' context) I was astounded by their response. Nineteen women indicated that they were interested in knowing more about my study and 13 self identified as feminists. This was in contrast to other studies that found women reluctant to be known as feminist (Adler, Laney & Packer, 1993; Grace, 1995; Hall, 1996). I interviewed all 13 women about their feminism and how that informed their leadership practice. From these 13 interviews I selected three to study in depth. The criteria I used for selecting the final three were that firstly each considered that her feminism informed her leadership practice, each had a broad social justice agenda (that included but went beyond the needs of women and girls), each publicly owned her feminism, and finally that each lived within commutable distance of where I lived. This final category was initially the least important but took on increasing importance as it became apparent that I was going to have to make repeated visits to each school. To travel long distances was financially prohibitive.

Given the influence of the 1989 and the subsequent education reforms on the work of the principal, I expected that realising their feminist leadership agenda would be very difficult, maybe too difficult. I was surprised.

The women

Kate is the principal of a school that is set in a small conservative town, both the school and the town have a mainly Pakeha (European) population, and the school has a socio-economic status (SES) decile ranking of five.[1] Kate became principal of the school four years ago. In the time she has been leading the school the 'take' of students from the community has risen from 65% to 85%. Kate is a strong supporter of the new reforms.

Kiri is the principal of a multi ethnic urban school[2] with a SES decile ranking of 2. There is a high level of poverty with the associated social problems in the student population. Kiri has a clearly articulated understanding of her own feminist leadership practice. She has been a principal for ten years and is less enamoured of the new reforms than Kate. However, she would not go back to the pre-reform days and thrives on the challenge of running such a school.

Parehuia is principal of an innercity, multi ethnic school with a SES decile ranking of 4.[3] The school does not have a school uniform. Parehuia's leadership is more low key and informal than either Kate's or Kiri's and is characterised by (amongst others) her commitment to Maaori and Pacific Island education and consensus decision-making.

The Findings

I present the findings in four parts. Firstly, I present those findings that particularly relate to how the increase in financial, accountability and marketing responsibilities impacted on the women's ability to implement their feminist leadership agenda. Secondly, because power sharing is so central to feminist educational leadership practice, I share some of the ways the women were able to do this despite the 'New Right' managerial leadership ethos. In the third part I present three important emerging themes in the way the women responded to the managerial ethos prevalent in an era of 'New Right' education reforms. They are: resistance, agreement and appropriation. Finally, I visit two important influences on their feminist principalship other than the 'New Right'

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1 1 is the lowest SES rating and 10 is the highest.

2 There are 43 different nationalities represented in the student population speaking almost as many different languages. For 50% of the students English is not their first language. To broadly categorise the nationalities, 24% are Pakeha, 20% are Maaori, 30% are of Pacific Island origin and 26% are other nationalities of mainly Asian origin.

3 The ethnic composition of the students of Parehuia's school is; Pakeha 58%, Maaori 13%, Samoan, 9%, Cook Island 5%, Niuean 3%, Tongan 3%, and various other ethnic groups 9%, which includes a small number of fee paying Asian students

education reforms. They are their own personal value systems and the school context in which they are operating.

The Impact Of Financial Responsibilities

For Parehuia and Kiri there was an element of choosing a school to lead where they could make the greatest difference for students experiencing learning and personal difficulties. Their choosing was part of their social justice agenda. For Parehuia, this was ethnic minority students and for Kiri students 'at risk.' Not surprisingly, this also equated with them being lower SES schools. I do not want to suggest that their concern was only for the disadvantaged students. Their concern embraced all students. Kate chose a school that was 'in trouble' in that the roll was declining as some members of the school community had lost faith in the school and chose to send their children elsewhere for their education. It may be that the Boards of Trustees of low SES schools are more willing to take a risk and appoint a woman.[4] It is also possible that it could be difficult for them to be appointed to more conservative schools. However, both Parehuia and Kiri commented that the schools of which they were principals were the kinds of schools they wanted to lead. This suggests that rather than having to take on the principalship of any school to which they could get appointed, these women chose where they wanted to be. They were operating from a platform of proaction rather than one of reaction.

To reiterate Kiri's words, the women principals of low SES schools went to "the frontiers of education." This underscores the importance of the context in determining what aspects of social justice were prioritised and therefore how the principal acted. So, although the macro context (the 'New Right') did impact on their leadership the micro context (the school), in part, also determined directions for action. This supports the literature that comments on the importance of the context in the enactment of leadership in schools (Beck, 1992; Ribbins, 1993). The three schools had very different student populations. The level of poverty experienced by the young people in Kiri's school meant that certain issues had to be dealt with before learning could take place. For Kate, the paramount issues on her appointment were the loss of community confidence in the school and the raising of student achievement. She did not have to deal with the same high incidence of poverty before she could put in place strategies for improving student behaviour and educational outcomes. As Kate herself commented, some problems can be solved by 'chucking money at them.' This problem-solving strategy is not at the disposal of lower SES schools.

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[4] Boards of Trustees are the governing bodies of schools.

However, particularly in the lower SES schools, there was not sufficient funding available to meet the perceived needs. Because the principal, as the manager of the school and a Board member, had increased financial responsibilities this forced the women to look beyond the government to the community, including the business and the international communities, to provide financial assistance. The dilemma embedded in this situation was that without the additional funding many students would not receive the type of support necessary to meet their specific needs. All three had initiated creative and essential strategies to assist 'at risk' students. Yet, finding the funding for such initiatives was not easy, not always successful, and very time-consuming. There was also no guarantee that funding would continue. This made ongoing financial planning difficult. With greater flexibility came greater uncertainty which forced the women to be creative in finding solutions to funding problems. For example, Kate extended the fee and non-fee paying international students' programme which, without a doubt, provided extra, welcome funding. By doing this, Kate had imported a greater cultural diversity into the school. However, as she stressed, her initial support for the programme was for curriculum and social reasons. This was an example of how these women, and Kate, in particular, appropriated the greater powers given to schools under the new reforms so that a better quality education could be delivered to their students. However, maybe this was only possible in higher SES schools where not so much time needed to be spent on attending to social issues, such as asocial student behaviour (Thrupp, 1996).

Low SES schools have the added difficulty of persuading parents that just because they have a high proportion of students from low income families, with the associated social difficulties, does not mean that they are providing education of a lesser quality. Given that schools with a low SES rating and a high cultural mix were the ones most likely to fail (Lauder et al, 1994; Thrupp, 1995, 1996) then this was a pretty gloomy scenario for the schools led by Kiri and Parehuia in particular. Certainly, there was some concern expressed by the staff that Kiri's school was viewed by the community as an 'at risk' school and therefore not the place for middle class students. However, as their audit reports attest, they were not in a "spiral of decline" (Lauder et al, 1994, p. 58), that is 'failing' schools that were losing students. This suggests that there was some other factor that was contributing to the 'success' of both schools.

With a high ethnic mix and a low socio-economic mix there is less money available both from the community and, if the roll declines, from the government also. Much debate has centred around why this situation has occurred and how it can be fixed. The issues surrounding this debate are complicated and usually polarise people into two camps. One camp sees the answer in increasing resourcing to these schools so specialist assistance could be given to the students (For example, Wilson, 1995) (Parehuia and

Kiri's position). The other camp considers that equity interests are best served by improving efficiency, including improved teaching (For example, The Treasury, 1987; Lough, 1990) (Kate's position). This debate mirrors the differences in how the women in this study positioned themselves with respect to the new reforms. It also highlights how influential both their personal value systems, and the context within which they were operating, were in shaping that position. This finding, and others, is an exemplar of the diversity among feminist educational leaders that is not addressed in the literature.

The findings of this study challenged Blackmore's (1993) assertion that devolution and decentralisation rather than increasing flexibility, discretion and autonomy for principals, actually reduced them. These women perceived themselves to have autonomy, discretion and flexibility especially in how they managed the operations grant.[5] The dilemma was that the greater autonomy, flexibility and discretion were being practised in a climate of inadequate funding. That is, they were able to shift and rearrange less money in more ways! Where there was the ability within the community, or through contestable funding, to meet the shortfall this was not such an issue. In schools located in low SES communities the time and energy expended in raising money to meet the shortfall may not be so successful, compounding the disadvantage experienced by many of these schools.

In summary, increased financial responsibilities did impact on these women's leadership. The impact was particularly noticeable in the lower SES schools as funding from the school community was more difficult to raise. In particular, 'choice' polices affected the cultural and socio-economic mix of Kiri's school which meant time had to be spent on finding extra funding. The personal difficulties experienced by many students needed to be dealt with before academic learning could be addressed. This finding alerts us to the influence school context has on the practice of feminist educational leadership.

However, although raising the necessary funds was a difficult and time-consuming task the women each had different ways of handling the situation. This finding alerts us to an important response to the managerial ethos: appropriation. I address appropriation, in some depth, later in this paper. The focus on increased financial responsibilities revealed another important finding that extended the knowledge about feminist educational leadership. It was that diversity in the practice of feminist educational leadership was evident amongst the women. This diversity is supported by other findings which I will elaborate on in the following sections of this paper.

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5 The operations grant is a lump sum of money given directly to schools by the government .

The Impact Of Accountability Responsibilities

None of the women had a problem with to whom they should be accountable; the students and their families. However, how that accountability might be exercised could be problematic; particularly, if excessive reporting and information demands by the educational bureaucracies meant time was taken away from their being student focused. For the women in this study, there was an agreement with the 'idea' that schools should be more accountable and that the focus of their feminist educational leadership be student centred. This study directly challenged Grace's (1995) finding that the headteachers (principals) in his study were cautious about the greater community accountability, and that few of them welcomed the new and closer partnerships with their school governors. Parehuia, Kiri and Kate welcomed the closer ties and all worked to build closer working partnerships that would empower their wider communities. Rather than being cautious about community accountability they fully endorsed it.

This study uncovered a number of 'personal' accountability strategies to which the women were committed that either were not in the literature on feminist educational leadership or were not explicit in the literature. For example, there were a number of ways in which each of the women demonstrated their commitment to being accountable including a commitment to; equal opportunity; their own professional development; the professional development of their staff; and the provision of a safe learning environment. I have called these their 'personal' accountability strategies in that they saw them as part of their accountability responsibilities to students. Accountability was an important feature of the women's feminist leadership which had as the goal providing the best possible learning environment, and thereby improved student learning. This accountability was personally driven by each of the women and often went beyond what was 'officially' required.

The first aspect of accountability relates to the women's commitment to equal opportunity. Providing equal opportunities for staff and students was a priority for each of the women. There was a 'fit' between the equity goals of the feminist women and the equity goals of the 1989 New Zealand education reforms. For example, women's representation in positions of leadership was an issue for all the women and all worked to ensure their fair representation. In Kiri's school women were fully represented, and in Parehuia's school women in middle and senior management positions outnumbered men by a ratio of 2:1.[6] This is not intended to infer that Kate was less committed as there are many factors that impinge on who gets appointed, including the calibre of those who apply and which positions become vacant. All the women agreed that both legislation

6 At the time of this study there were more women than men on the staff of Western Springs College.

and personal commitment were important in making a difference. Additionally, Kate commented that having an equal employment opportunity programme without the personal commitment from the principal was useless. Another important issue arose from this finding. All three commented that they believed that women (although Kate was less sure of this), and certain kinds of men, were encouraged to apply for positions in their schools because there was a woman principal. That is, their gender had a sifting effect on who wanted to teach in their school. So, the findings from this study suggest a number of possible reasons why women were well represented in the schools run by Parehuia and Kiri in particular. Firstly, the gender of the principal could be a factor in improving women's representation. Secondly, the hiring practices in the schools of feminist principals may be more gender sensitive.

The literature on feminist educational leadership suggested that the commitment to a broad social justice agenda included a commitment to an advancement of the needs of women and girls. Each of the women in this study had a sophisticated understanding of the oppression of women and girls in education and implemented strategies to counteract their disadvantage. In support of that theorisation, and in contrast to the women in Hall's (1996) study, the women in this study were overtly committed to the welfare of women and girls. Although the three women in this study were concerned to appoint the best person for the job, again in contrast to the women in Hall's (1996) study, their support for women was apparent. Hall (1996, p. 194) commented on the women in her study, "they appear to fail the feminist critique's test of emancipatory praxis by not acting as advocates for women's rights or taking necessary steps to advance women's particular interests." This was not so for the women in this study as the stance they took on sexist language, the support given to women applying for promotion, and the support groups established for women staff, attest. In all the schools, girls had a high profile in the leadership of the school and in academic performance. The women's concern also extended to Maaori and Pacific Island students. They worked hard to put in place programmes and practices that would actively support the achievement (in the broadest sense) of these groups of students.

The second aspect of 'personal' accountability that was evident in the women's leadership relates to their commitment to their own professional development, which included both organised and informal activities. Like the women in Hall's (1996) study these women viewed this as essential in helping them to do deliver the best leadership they could. However, the enormity of the job meant that this was not easy and supports the findings of other New Zealand research regarding the large workload involved in being a school principal (Keown et al, 1992; Mitchell et al, 1992; Robertson, 1991, 1995; Wylie, 1994, 1995). Kate had completed further university qualifications. Kiri

had taken sabbatical leave to pursue her interest in 'at risk' students, and Parehuia was awarded study leave to explore further her interest in Pacific Island achievement. The women in this study viewed my research as a professional development opportunity and all were eager to receive feedback on their practice from both their staff and myself. They did not shy away from taking 'on board' the aspects of feedback that focused on areas for development. The women also found the feedback assisted them to reflect on their principalship. They picked up ideas for change in ways they operated from both my observations and the teachers' feedback.

Within the context of this study the realities of their heavy workload meant that getting time to involve themselves in professional development activities was difficult. They were hungry for feedback from a neutral outsider. By being open to the feedback of others the women "held up a mirror to their own performance" (Hall, 1996, p. 186). They were keen to learn and to do better. This research provided an opportunity for them to do that, which they all welcomed. Grundy (1993) argued that critical self-reflection was essential to emancipatory leadership practice, that the purpose of that critical self-reflection was, amongst other purposes, to equalise power and to focus on the educational aspects of their work, and that this would be very difficult to achieve in hierarchical bureaucratic institutions. Parehuia, Kiri and Kate worked to alter the power relations and to be educationally focused. Yet, there were aspects of the 'New Right' reforms that made that difficult such as the enormous time commitment involved in dealing with the increased financial, accountability and marketing responsibilities. But as Grundy (1993) went on to suggest bureaucracies do offer opportunities within them to practice emancipatory leadership such as creating gender inclusive curriculum. She pointed out that it is unlikely that emancipatory leaders will actually arrive at emancipation (Grundy, 1993). So, perhaps it is more realistic to suggest that Parehuia, Kiri and Kate were continually in the process of becoming emancipatory.

The third aspect of 'personal' accountability relates to their support for staff, including both personal and professional support. The affirmation of staff by each of the women, and in Parehuia's school the overt respect for, and acceptance of, staff (and students) who were homosexual, was also part of their practice that demonstrated their support for staff. It can be very difficult for many homosexual teachers to declare their homosexuality in their professional lives (De Lyon & Widdowson-Migniuolo, 1988). How much safer and more empowering it must be for gay men and women to be accepted and respected in their professional domain. Parehuia presented herself as a role model who was committed to social justice and equity, and who valued and respected diversity.

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The literature on feminist educational leadership supports empowering, enabling and validating colleagues (Matthews, 1995; Regan, 1990). However, Matthew's (1995) study focused on support of women by women. Although the women in this study did support other women, and in turn were supported by women, their support extended to men and women staff from ethnic minority groups, and to men also.

The fourth aspect of accountability demonstrated by all the women was providing a safe learning environment. This study found an explicit commitment to anti-violence by all the women. All were uncompromising in their commitment to anti-violence because each of the women believed that when people feel unsafe and frightened then learning cannot take place. The literature did not spell out the importance of anti-violence policies and practices to feminist educational leaders. However, Beck (1992), Court (1991), and Hurty (1995) make reference to the importance of regard, respect, nurturing and compassion and it is difficult to envision this type of school climate where violence is part of the school culture. Both Gosetti and Rusch (1995) and Joyce (1987) suggested that feminist educational leadership embraced a wide political agenda that was not just anti-sexist but was also anti-racist. These women all went beyond that to include anti-violence as well.

This raised a dilemma for the women in that taking such a strong stand against violence, in the short term at least, affected roll numbers. Suspending students for violence, and not being prepared to take violent students suspended from other schools, meant that the women did not bolster their student numbers at any cost. Parehuia, Kiri and Kate were not prepared to compromise their values regarding violence (in all its forms) in order to increase the number of students in the school so as to protect jobs. Their values were not 'for sale.' These women were "ethical entrepreneurs" (Hall, 1996, p. 202) who like Codding (1993, p. 12) often asked themselves, "Will this benefit students?" This finding underscores the importance of the women's personal value system in informing their feminist leadership practice.

However, their commitment to their values sometimes appeared to others as if they were hard-nosed about decisions and inflexible. Yet, the women's leadership agenda and its student focus was transparent. They wore their 'passion' on their sleeves. This was at the same time both a blessing and a curse. For example, some people were put off by Kate's inflexibility on the suspension of students taking drugs at school, and others were brought 'on board,' by her anti-violence stance.

Decisions that involved the welfare of students and staff were carefully thought through and made after consultation with others. This was particularly evident in disciplinary matters. All the women viewed clear guidelines regarding acceptable behaviour as part of caring for students. As Kiri commented, students needed to know

when "enough was enough." Regan's (1995) point that feminist leaders can only be judged successful if the people in their schools genuinely care for one another is important here. By providing a safe learning environment students were learning to care for one another by finding non-violent ways of solving disputes. Judging these women by Regan's criteria, these women were successful feminist leaders.

In summary, all the women agreed that accountability systems were necessary to help improve educational outcomes and there were some similarities among the women as to how that 'personal' accountability was demonstrated; for example creating anti-violence schools, being committed to the professional development of themselves and their staff, and working for equal opportunity.

The Impact Of Marketing Responsibilities

These women were aware of the competitive ethos that was involved in attracting students to their schools. However, Parehuia and Kiri disliked competing with neighbouring schools for students. Kate was in a different position because there was no other state funded, coeducational secondary school close by. Parehuia and Kiri found competing for students so distasteful that they both refused to get involved. However, Kiri realised that some parents living close to her school were choosing to send their children elsewhere. Her strategy was to present her school in the very best possible light, by celebrating its diversity and successes. By doing this she did not compromise her personal position by being in competition with her colleagues, despite the demands of the 'New Right'. Kiri was demonstrating what Harold (1995) called pragmatic leadership.

School location was a factor in the discomfort felt by the women in marketing their schools. Kate was not directly competing with another state funded coeducational secondary school. Instead, she was competing with schools in a neighbouring city. This did not afford her the same level of discomfort as Parehuia and Kiri who had other state funded coeducational secondary schools close by. The women were all committed to state funded education so their difficulty lay in competing with these schools not with competing with the private sector. However, I argue that Kate's comfort with marketing was closely linked to the location of her school being the only state, coeducational, secondary school in town. She was not thrown into competing with 'like' schools in the same locality as were Parehuia and Kiri.

I mentioned earlier how Kate appropriated opportunities afforded by the 'New Right' education reforms. As this is an important finding of this study I revisit it in connection with marketing Kate's school. Appropriation was not evident in the literature on feminist

educational leadership. However, Stalker (1994) alluded to appropriation in her feminist study of women mentoring women in higher education. She commented how the women were "active agents" who not only reacted and resisted institutional structures but acted upon them as well. This enabled the women to "re-create and re-form" these structures (Stalker, 1994, p. 370). Stalker (1996) developed further the idea of appropriation when she commented that educators with a social justice agenda would find it difficult to "maintain and retain that agenda, given the potency of international forces." She suggested a model of appropriation would, "redirect energy to capturing individuals, organisations and social structures" (p. 375). In this study, Kate appropriated (captured) the opportunity the 1989 education reforms gave her to extensively market her school overseas. She saw introducing students from overseas as having dual benefits which assisted her to achieve two of her equity goals. Firstly, it provided a greater cultural diversity in the school (although not necessarily greater socio-economic diversity) and provided funding so that students with special needs could be better catered for. In doing so, she challenged and disrupted the notion that the school's student population should reflect their communities.

Being a Pacific Islander was influential in determining how Parehuia felt about marketing. In a culture where cooperation and humility are integral to the way they operate then there is a difficulty in operating in an education climate that values competing for students on an open market. The two positions are antithetical and help to explain why Parehuia was so resistant to marketing her school. This finding alerts us to the impact and importance of ethnicity in partially determining how it is enacted. Blackmore's (1993) suggestion that market driven education creates a tension with collegial ways of operating is pertinent for both Parehuia and Kiri's leadership, but for Parehuia in particular. For Kate the tension was not so apparent.

Sharing Power within a 'New Right' Context

The diversity within feminist educational leadership in exercising power, and how the exercise of that power was part of their resistance to hierarchical management structures, was an important finding of this study. There were a wide range of personal responses that were dependent upon school context, the personality of the women, their ethnicity, their personal educational vision and whether there was an agreement between that and the reforms. Parehuia, Kiri and Kate, to differing degrees, resisted the implementation of hierarchical management structures. Although all the women had a commitment to sharing power there were differences in the way each chose to do this, and in the way this was perceived by others.

The literature suggested that emancipatory practices in leadership, such as consensus and consultative decision-making, could be viewed by some as indicative of weak leadership (Grundy, 1993; Weiner, 1993). Because they operated in this way did not mean that Parehuia, Kiri and Kate were seen as weak leaders. Staff often used the word 'strong' to describe Kiri and Kate's style of leadership. They were strong leaders who worked to include others in the process of leadership. However, there were times when others did not perceive them as sharing power. To differing degrees, these women showed that strong leadership and emancipatory practices were not mutually exclusive. They demonstrated that, as Blackmore (1993) suggested, power could be redistributed in self-managing schools.

The literature suggested that the pressures to conform to the male bureaucratic norms of leadership would be great (Cooper, 1995). However, the women actively sought ways to give others 'voice' and were prepared to use the power invested in the role of principal to push for change. As Neville (1988) commented, the women in her study were able to practice alternative models of leadership because they *were* principals. This may be more difficult to do from a position that has less power invested in the role. Although it was the increased workload since the 1989 education reforms that 'forced' Kiri to look at alternative ways of leading the school nevertheless a co-principalship was possible. Kiri's involvement in a co-principalship is a high profile example of power sharing. Kiri commented:

> By giving away some power and becoming a co-principal the school and the cause[social justice] will be better served. Now that, to my mind, is classic feminism.

Co-principalships are relatively new in New Zealand and women have a high profile in the few shared principalships that there are (Marian Court, personal communication, June 14, 1996). Speculating that shared principalships will involve high levels of power sharing, consultation, and collegiality, and that good communication systems and skills will be essential, it is not surprising that some women principals find this alternative model of leadership attractive. However, in the past the preferred leadership style of many women that involved the actions of power sharing were viewed as 'at odds' with the dominant masculinist discourse of leadership. Blackmore (1993, p. 44) commented that there is a similarity between the management and feminist literature that suggests that, "...women can offer new forms of leadership skills which are necessary for new forms of organisation." It would appear that through shared principalships, women are at the forefront of offering alternative forms of leadership. Kiri appropriated the opportunity that devolution made possible under the 1989 reforms. It was only since the

implementation of the new reforms that secondary schools have been able to consider such alternative models of leadership. Yet, despite the possibilities of a co-principalship, to date, there are only two secondary school co-principalships in operation in New Zealand.

Power sharing was evident in the reciprocal talk (Hurty, 1995) in which the women engaged and was most characteristic of Parehuia's leadership. Yet, while both Kiri and Kate were keen to hear others' viewpoints they were perceived by some others to, at times, dominate conversations and to be somewhat scary to approach. A methodological weakness of some previous studies into women's leadership was that they were single perspective studies and relied on the 'voice' of the women leaders. The perception of 'critical others' (Ribbins, 1993) was not sought. This study showed that there is value in seeking others' perspectives as they can reveal differences in perception between how the principal sees herself operating and how her staff see her operating.

Particularly, Kiri and Kate were quick decision-makers which, at times, caused them some frustration when others did not arrive at decisions quite so quickly. A number of staff commented that Kiri needed to listen more. For Kate, staff comments on this aspect of her leadership focused on her perceived control of the decision-making process. This suggests that to facilitate the smooth operation of the school the 'pragmatic' leadership described by Harold (1995) may also have been in operation in both Kiri and Kate's leadership. Reciprocity (Hurty, 1995) is the involvement of the stake holders in the process of decision-making and keeping their needs in mind. These women tried not ride roughshod over others when making decisions even if at times, with Kiri and Kate, they came to decisions more quickly than others wished. On the other hand, Parehuia was committed to consensus decision-making and was seen by her staff to constantly practice it. This again raises the issue of the influence of ethnicity on feminist educational leadership practice.

Power sharing through the involvement of others in the change process was important to all the women. This helped not only to establish ownership of change but also to share the workload. Parehuia, Kiri and Kate were very aware that without the collaboration and the cooperation of the school community their visions would not be realised. Early in her principalship Kate and her Board of Trustees opted for direct resourcing of teacher's salaries.[7] This was against the wishes of the staff who went on strike. In the end Kate and her staff backed down. Parehuia and Kiri resisted direct resourcing of teachers' salaries on philosophical grounds. Kate, was not philosophically opposed to the direct resourcing of teachers' salaries; she agreed with it. Even though in

[7] The direct resourcing of teacher's salaries is a very contentious issue in New Zealand education. It is strongly opposed by the teacher unions as they consider it is a cost cutting exercise that will lead to a lowering of teacher's salaries.

Kate's case there was a 'fit' between the 'New Right' reforms (devolution of financial responsibility of teachers' salaries i.e. reduced state intervention), and Kate's personal endorsement of this, she realised that without the support of staff it would not work: the cost in terms of damage to principal/staff/Board of Trustees relationships, was considered too great. This finding illustrates how the diversity in feminist educational leadership practice is, in part, related to their agreement with particular aspects of the 'New Right' education reforms. Power sharing for these women was less problematic in a climate of managerialism than the literature suggested it would be.

Important Emerging Themes: Resistance, Agreement And Appropriation

This study found three emerging themes in the ways the women responded to the 'New Right' managerial ethos of leadership. In this section of the paper I discuss these responses. It is important to note that these were interconnected and interacted with one another. So, what could be called resistance by one woman in one context might also appear to be appropriation by another woman. The lines between each of the responses were not definite. They were blurred and layered. At times, this created tensions and contradictions for the women.

Parehuia, Kiri and Kate wanted to bring about change that would benefit the students at their schools. Resistance was one strategy the women used to assist them to achieve that goal. In pursuit of their feminist leadership agenda Parehuia, Kiri and Kate enacted their resistance on three levels; public, administrative, and individual. For example, public forums were used, such as conferences and the media, to speak out about equity and social justice issues. They were not prepared to be silenced in case their outspokenness adversely influenced caregivers' decisions about which school to send their children to. As Kiri indicated she knew of principals who were not willing to speak out publicly for this reason. On the administrative level resistance was enacted when the women continued to use inclusive models of decision-making despite the workload involved and the time it took. On the personal level, all continued to teach thereby individually resisting the pressure to involve themselves in managerial tasks that took them away from what they personally enjoyed doing. Parehuia's refusal to 'power dress' was another example of her personal resistance to how others viewed she, as principal, should dress.

Whereas both Parehuia and Kiri had a high public profile and frequently spoke out about how the 'New Right' educational policies were affecting the life chances of the young people, Kate's concern was mainly expressed at the school (micro) level. Her focus was not on the broader political front. However, all were prepared to challenge the

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decisions of educational bureaucracies. Yet, Parehuia, Kiri and Kate had differing reasons for resisting some of the bureaucratic demands. On one level, Parehuia's, Kiri's, and Kate's resistance was because those demands took them away from their student focus. On another level, Parehuia and Kiri resisted because they were concerned about the reduced government involvement in education. For Kate, at yet another level, her resistance was because she considered the Ministry of Education, for example, was too involved in the running of schools.

Codd's (1993, p. 157) assertion that under the new reforms a school leader's practice would shift from an emphasis on social justice to an emphasis on pursuing "the goals of competition and choice" was not strongly supported by the findings of this study. Each found their own ways of keeping their focus on the classroom. Some of these ways were common to all the women. For example, they continued to teach. Teaching was part of their resistance. Although administrative tasks did, to some extent, interfere with their preferred focus on teaching and learning Parehuia, Kiri and Kate fiercely resisted becoming managers. In fact, all three commented that they would not do the job if they had to change the focus. As with the women in Grace's (1995) study they were very aware of the danger of the managerial culture overwhelming them and interfering with their classroom focus. That was why all chose to continue to teach. So, although Codd's (1993) and Wylie's (1995) assertions that there were increased managerial tasks was correct, these feminist women ensured that, as much as possible, it did not take them away from where their hearts lay, with students. They sought ways to rebalance their lives both personally and professionally.

The second response to the managerial ethos was an agreement with particular aspects of the 'New Right' education reforms. For example, two important areas of agreement were the equity goals and the increased accountability responsibilities. However, in particular, Kate's agreement with the underpinning philosophies of the reforms went beyond the agreement of either Parehuia or Kiri. Kate's leadership was characterised by her organisational ability including efficient management systems (Education Review Office, 1995) but she saw these as a means to an end: improved educational outcomes. This supports Blackmore's (1993) point that feminist women may appear to have been seduced and coopted by managerialism. However, rather than being seduced, these women sought creative solutions to funding and other management difficulties so they could provide the support necessary for their students. Seduction implies that some form of persuasion was needed to bring the women 'on board' with the philosophy of the new reforms. Kate did not need to be seduced. She already agreed with the philosophy underlying the reforms, and appropriated opportunities offered by the reforms to help her to deliver her educational agenda. The new reforms were not problematic for Kate as

Blackmore (1993) suggested. She agreed with them. Kate, like Parehuia and Kiri, had a commitment to social justice and equity, sharing power, caring and improving student learning outcomes. However, because she agreed with the underpinning philosophies of the new reforms, her resistance was different to the resistance enacted by Kiri and Parehuia. Unlike Parehuia and Kiri she wanted even less state intervention in education. Kate certainly relished the greater local control given to schools and wanted more. She believed she used the extra powers and control given to her by the new reforms to empower the students, parents and staff.

The third response by the women to the managerial leadership ethos of the 'New Right' education reforms was appropriation. There were two high profile examples of appropriation. The first example was Kate's appropriation of the opportunity to market her school overseas to attract fee paying students which I discussed earlier. The second example involved Kiri initiating and implementing a co-principalship with the deputy principal of her school. So, rather than being coopted by managerialism these women (for example Kiri's co-principalship) were appropriating opportunities offered by the reforms. The women were "actors who are able to take and shape space to their own ends" (Stalker, 1994, p. 370). However, it could be argued that without the heavier workload imposed by the new reforms Kiri would not have needed to look for ways of sharing the workload and responsibility. Although I suggest that the setting up of a co-principalship was an act of appropriation it could also be argued that it was one of resistance so that Kiri could remain student focused. However, it is my argument that it was because of her feminism that such an alternative was considered, and the new reforms made the consideration and implementation of such a proposal possible.

In the following section of this paper I discuss two major influences on the women's feminist educational leadership within a 'New Right' education context; they are, their personal value systems and the school context. These appeared to be important influences in shaping how the women's principalship was practised and again highlighted the diversity in the feminist educational leadership among the three women.

The Importance Of Personal Value Systems

The women's personal value systems influenced whether they appropriated, resisted or agreed with the demands of the 'New Right' reforms. Their personal value systems included strongly held core values, such as their commitment to a safe learning environment, and being student focused. These core values were very important in shaping their feminist educational leadership practice. Rather than compromise some of these values Parehuia, Kiri and Kate would rather give up the principalship. Blackmore

(1996) mentioned that feminist educational practice would work to change the gender divisions of labour, redefine how leadership is practised, develop a caring school community, ensure that their schools would be culturally inclusive and diverse, lead in such a way that others would be empowered and included in the management of the school, and finally examine the role of the state and its effect on the education of young people. These are methods of operating that have strong values as their platform. The women in this study did engage in the leadership behaviours that Blackmore (1996) identified. However, they engaged in those behaviours differently from one another. That difference was dependent, in part, upon their personal value systems.

Another significant example of how personal value systems impacted on the women's leadership was demonstrated in Parehuia's commitment to consensus decision-making, her accessibility to all members of the school community, and her discomfort with marketing her school. Parehuia commented that these leadership actions were shaped by her cultural values. These were 'core' aspects of Parehuia's leadership that were so important to her that she was not prepared to compromise them, even though they created a significant tension for her. Leading in this way was time-consuming, making the completion of administrative tasks during school time difficult. Completing routine administration tasks at home diminished the amount of time she was able to spend with her family. Her discomfort with marketing may have had ramifications for the number of students enrolling, and in turn this could have impacted on the job security for staff. Parehuia was caught in a dilemma between her preferred leadership style, which was shaped by her cultural values, and the demands of running a school in a 'New Right' context.

The Importance of School Context

The second influence on feminist educational leadership practice within a 'New Right' context that emerged from this study was the make-up of the student and community population, such as the ethnic and socio-economic mix. The school context influenced how the women responded to the 'New Right' reforms, what was prioritised, who was appointed to the staff, and about what each woman was outspoken. Schools that experience high levels of poverty amongst their student population have different issues to deal with than those that do not. This causes tension between the immediate needs of the students and the need to be seen as 'successful' in the eyes of the school community and thereby attract those students whose families are considering sending them elsewhere. Issues associated with social justice and equity need to be prioritised before learning, for many students, can take place. Not only was their leadership

influenced by their school context, these women also set out to shape the school context by the appointment of staff who shared their educational values. 'Shaping' the profile of the staff was utilised by the women. Although secondary schools have always appointed their own staff, so this was not a consequence of the 1989 reforms, they appointed staff who were sympathetic to their feminist educational leadership agenda. It could be argued that although for Parehuia and Kiri academic achievement was very important, it was not more important than other aspect of the students' lives; such as their emotional and physical welfare.

Furthermore, there is evidence in Kate's leadership of shaping the school's student population by importing cultural diversity. These are not the actions of women being controlled by the policies of the new reforms as suggested by Codd (1993). Rather, they are the actions of women who are prepared to act creatively in constructing a school environment that assisted them in delivering their educational agenda.

In summary, this study provided details of feminist educational leadership 'in action' and 'on the ground.' This detail is missing from the literature on feminist educational leadership which is characterised by its homogeneity and abstraction. Each of these women was actively involved in the construction of her own alternative theory of educational leadership; that is, there was a proactive element to their leadership. She was not just passively responding to the demands imposed by the educational bureaucracies. Her practice was characterised by its shifting nature, its flexibility, its creativity, its emotive quality, the dominant role played by her personal value system and the school context. The 'New Right' context in which these women were operating was less influential in defining their practice than I anticipated. Although at times it made it difficult for them to operate, it did not stop them.

A Final Word: Surfing The Waves

As I interviewed and observed the feminist educational leaders, as I interviewed staff and read the documentation and then compiled the portraits the analogy of surfing the waves would not leave me. Imagine a competent surfer riding her board on a big wave. Watch her as she chooses her wave, as she stands and shifts her balance backwards and forwards, from side to side so she can manoeuvre the board to take advantage of the wave. She uses the power of the wave to get the best ride, and she knows when to cut out or take the consequences. She knows there are forces out there she can not control but she can use her skills and experience to read the situation so she can harness the power of the wave to get the best possible ride. She has the courage to ride the big waves. She does not play safe with the small ones but thrives on the challenge the big

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waves demand. Watching these women work was much like watching a first class surfer.

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